

ADVENT AWAKENINGS

SAMPLE INVITATION TALK TO BE GIVEN ON SIGN-UP SUNDAY OR WEEKEND

(This talk will be most effective if it is publicized in advance so that parishioners already have a frame of reference for *Advent Awakenings*. Bulletin announcements and announcements at the end of Mass are especially helpful.)

Usually, the celebrant introduces you by saying something like this: “As you are probably aware, something very exciting and new is happening here at St _____ . We are taking part in a program called *Advent Awakenings* from RENEW International. I thank _____, who will tell us about *Advent Awakenings* and why you will want to make it a part of your preparation for Christmas.”

SPEAKERS:

- Look enthusiastic as you step up to the lectern.
- Speak with a tone of sincerity.
- Start with a story – perhaps about an Advent tradition in your family. Your first line has to grab the congregation’s attention.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. The more personal the talk, the better: make it your own. Don’t be afraid to use humor. Below is a sample. Share why you are part of *Advent Awakenings* and/or your experience in a small Christian community in the past.
2. If you are not familiar with the microphone, practice with it ahead of time. Speak slowly and clearly. Ask someone to listen from the back of the church to make sure you are audible, but remember that sound travels much better when the church is empty than it does when the pews are occupied with people wearing fall clothing. Look up at the people frequently as you speak.
3. Include directions about your sign-up process. For example, where are the sign-up cards – in the pews, in back of the church? How are the cards to be returned?

What can you tell someone who is not attending Mass in the parish this weekend but who might be interested in *Advent Awakenings*?

4. When you introduce yourself, tell the assembly more than your name. Make a personal connection. There are two examples in the talk below.

Sample talk

Good Afternoon/morning/evening, my name is _____.

I have been a parishioner at _____ for most of my life, but many of you may recognize me as a member of the Parish Finance Council who speaks at Mass during the annual capital campaign (or as a choir member, Eucharistic minister, hospitality minister, etc.).

Or...

I usually attend the 10:30 a.m. Mass and sit right over there with my husband and our three boys.

Today, I am here to say a few words about a wonderful opportunity that is coming to our parish. *Advent Awakenings: Trust the Lord* is a faith-sharing process for small groups to help us deepen our observance of Advent.

Have you ever found yourself tired of Christmas before it arrives, thanks to the sales campaigns that seem to begin on Labor Day?

Have you ever found yourself dreading the shopping, the bills, the housework?

Have you ever found yourself just wishing Christmas was *over* so that you could go back to your normal life?

Have you ever seen one of those signs or bumper stickers – “Keep Christ in Christmas” – and wondered to yourself how that’s possible?

Have you ever looked back on Christmas with a feeling that you missed something?

If you said “yes” to any of these questions, you are not alone.

Well, that's where *Advent Awakenings* comes in.

This is a chance to *do something* about what we hear so much about every year.

Our parish, along with many parishes around the country, is going to use *Advent Awakenings* to revive in our hearts the true spirit of the season before Christmas – the spirit of anticipating, expecting, *longing for*, the coming of Jesus.

Groups of eight to ten people will meet in each other's homes for about 90 minutes, once during each week of Advent.

Each time the group meets, there will be prayer, the Gospel reading for the following Sunday, faith-sharing, and an invitation to put your faith into action in your lives.

Each person in the group will have a book with the contents of the session so that you can prepare for the sessions.

The book also includes devotions that you can conduct at home with your families including blessings for your Advent wreath, crèche, and Christmas tree; a personal reflection for Christmas Eve, and a blessing for your home on Epiphany.

Now why would you want to be a part of this process?

- Maybe you want to meet new people; that's a good reason
- Maybe you want to learn more about your faith and your God; that's good too
- Maybe you want to try to revise how you look at the world.
- Maybe you want to make the season of Advent a real part of your life rather than an idea that has no impact on you outside of Sunday Mass.

Whatever your reason, we want you to be part of this. God will not be outdone in generosity, and you will be glad you said yes.

Don't miss this chance to experience Advent in a new and meaningful way.

In your pews there are Sign-Up cards. Most people find it easiest to sign up for the date and time that is most convenient for them.

Remember this is only for four weeks.

We will organize the groups according to when you can meet. Just fill out the cards, and put them in the basket when the hospitality ministers come around to collect them. We'll get back to you. How easy is that?

Just to summarize:

I am inviting you to accept this invitation to be either:

- A participant in a small community or
- A leader or co-leader of a small-community gathering

We promise to offer training and to teach you how to lead the group, or maybe you would like to offer your home to host a small community gathering

On behalf of the parish staff and the other members of our parish team, I invite you to join us on this exciting journey to renew our faith, our parish community and our church.

Thank you for your attention and I can guarantee that you will not be disappointed if you sign up for *Advent Awakenings: Trust the Lord*.

